

February 14

By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Matthew 12:37

ALL our words are taken by the Lord as an index of our hearts. If our words are

(Mat 12:36-37 KJV) "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. [37] For by thy words..."

OV208-211 "The Church has her judgment day in the present life—during this Gospel Age. All consecrated believers, begotten of the Holy Spirit, are now on trial for everlasting life or for everlasting death..."

The Lord's consecrated people, have a great responsibility—a responsibility of what effect their words and influence have upon others. Our words, whether written or spoken, exercise an influence upon the minds and thoughts of others. Frequently they go from one to another, and thus, if pernicious, evil is spread far and near and the word once uttered cannot be recalled... Oh, the power of a slanderous word! Oh, the power of an insinuation! Yea, even of a shrug of the shoulder! Who does not know it? Who is unaware of the fact that this is the practice of the world daily; and alas, the practice also of many of God's people—professing Christians! The bitter word of sarcasm or insinuation is shot out often unthinkingly, but the terrible poison goes from heart to heart and fresh roots of bitterness are scattered abroad, which a lifetime of holy living cannot fully counteract.

On the contrary, what a power the tongue has for good.... As an illustration: What speaker or writer has ever done more to help poor humanity than the Prophet David in the inspired Psalms which he wrote? Truly, as Solomon has said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Pr 25:11.) As for the Church, the Lord has indeed agreed that He will not judge the Church according to their words and their deeds entirely, but according to their spirit, their intention, their will, their energy, their zeal for Him and His Truth. Nevertheless, He assures the Church that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and that they may thus judge or test themselves. If their hearts are right—full of love for God, for the brethren, for mankind, for their enemies, they will speak accordingly, manifesting their love and kindness in words as well as in deeds. The good heart out of its good treasure will shower blessings—fruits and flowers of refreshment and kindness, while the evil heart will send forth bitter words, poisoned arrows, injurious to all with whom they come in contact.

Whoever, therefore, finds that he is continually stirring up strife and wounding his friends should promptly make an examination of his heart to ascertain the trouble there.

He should not be content to say, "I meant no harm." The heart that is not full of goodness, kindness, generosity, love, will likely not control the tongue properly. We must reach the place where not only we do not will to do harm to our neighbors, but where we sincerely wish to do them good. Then that good heart, out of its treasure of goodness, will speak words of kindness, of

rebellious, or disloyal, or frivolous, or flip-pant, or unkind, unthankful, unholy or impure, the heart is judged accordingly, on the principle that, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."... That as imperfect beings we may always be perfect in

love.

Men Shall Give an Account.

But now, considering the words of our text as applicable to the Millennium, how will the world render its account in the future respecting the words of the present life?... The Judgment Day will be the thousand year period of the Millennium and the account of every evil act, of every sinful deed, and of every pernicious word will be recorded in the individual's own character, just as a towel bears the mark of every unclean wash dried upon it. In other words, the wrong-doer not only injures others, but specially injures and marks himself by the wrong he has practiced in evil speaking and evildoing, and the more deeply has he marked his character accordingly. It is in line with this that the Scriptures assure us that in the resurrection time many will come forth to shame and lasting contempt...

The shame will last until gradually they will be able to demonstrate a more noble character...

By Thy Words Justified.

The lesson is in harmony with the Scriptural declaration, "Blessed is the man who is not condemned by that which he alloweth." That is to say, the ungenerous, the unkind, are very apt to blame others strongly for misdemeanors of which they themselves are guilty. The man whose words respecting others do not condemn himself is to be congratulated as a happy man indeed. The person whose criticism of others is so kindly, so generous, so merciful as to not involve a condemnation of his own course is certainly an exceptional man or woman. We call to remembrance our Lord's words, "With whatsoever measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again," and, interpreting our text in harmony with this, if our words are generous and kind, loving and benevolent we shall receive similarly kind treatment of the Lord. If our language respecting others be harsh, cynical, critical, unkind, we may expect reproofs from the Lord. Why? Because all mankind are by nature fallen, imperfect, depraved; and the person who sees the faults of others and fails to see his own, needs the correcting chastisements of the Lord to show him his true condition reflected in his course of conduct and language toward and respecting others: he indicates that he himself needs to be taught some very important lessons without which he will not be prepared to make progress toward the Divine standards of character.

On the contrary, the person who is kind, gentle, forgiving, forbearing, sympathetic, disposed to make allowances for others shows that he has learned an important lesson already and that, to a considerable extent, his heart is right. Whatever there is wrong with such a generous soul is unintentionally wrong, a wrong which is entrenched in his flesh, but with which his heart is not in accord. By his kindly words respecting others he marks himself, indicates his character as of the kind which God can approve; as one of the class who at least

word and deed is not possible. Despite our best endeavors we will sometimes err in word as well as in deed, yet the perfect mastery of our words and ways is the thing to be sought by vigilant and faithful effort. Z '96-32 R1938:1

love their neighbor as themselves, and thus imply also that they love God, because as the Apostle points out, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Contrariwise, he who loves his neighbor speaks generously of him, is merciful toward him, and compassionate, undoubtedly would greatly respect and love the Divine character in its perfection of Justice, Wisdom and Love.

Blessed are the Merciful.

This brings us to another Scripture of similar tenor: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." It is true that God gave to natural Israel a code of laws which defined the course of life for them saying, Thou shalt not do this and that. Yet that Law was intended in great measure to show to Israel and to the world the impossibility of an imperfect man or woman keeping perfectly the Divine requirements. When the Lord would state His Law from the other standpoint—positively and not negatively, He sums the matter up in a few words, Thou shalt love the Lord supremely and thy neighbor as thyself. He who is merciful is in the condition to be blessed of the Lord, because he more than others approximates the standard of the Divine Law—Love; for mercy is the expression of love.

We see, then, that the Divine promise that he who is merciful to his neighbor will receive the more mercy from the Lord is not a mere ipse dixit, nor a mere rewarding of such a proper course. Rather it is in harmony with the principles and essence of the Divine government, because the more generous and loving the heart, the nearer to the perfect condition.

If this principle could be rightly seen by Christian people it would work an almost instantaneous revolution in the hearts and conduct of all who desire Divine approval and favor. Instead of burning one another at the stake; instead of putting on thumb screws; instead of condemning one another to eternal torment, Christians would be seeking to bless one another, to think and feel kindly respecting one another and disposed to pray God's blessing upon those who despitefully use them and persecute them. Instead of slander and misrepresentation and envious insinuations, the spirit of love and kindness and mercy and godlikeness would more and more prevail amongst those who have named the name of Christ and have professedly enlisted under His banner and covenanted to walk in His footsteps.

Nor would the blessing stop with the Church. The world, seeing such an example of love and kindness, would be ready to take knowledge of the followers of Jesus, as they did in the days of the Apostles, saying, "Behold, how these Christians love one another" "Then our Lord's words would have a practical illustration, "A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" to the extent of laying down our lives for each other. As the Apostle declares, "We ought also to lay down our

lives for the brethren...

According to the standards set forth in our text the worldly, if they have more of

the quality of mercy in their hearts will evidently be more pleasing to God than those who have made much profession and

neglected the Master's commands and failed to cultivate his spirit of love and mercy, in word and deed."

R1937 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

BY THY WORDS ACQUITTED; BY THY WORDS CONDEMNED

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle [unprofitable or pernicious] word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof on a day of judgment. For by thy words thou wilt be acquitted, and by thy words thou wilt be condemned."--Matt. 12:34-37.

REALIZING that we, the Church, are at the present time under the inspection of our kingly Bridegroom, who is now present (Matt. 22:11) to gather out of his Kingdom [in its present embryo or formative condition] all things that offend" (Matt. 13:41), and to gather unto himself his jewels, his bride (Mal. 3:17), we cannot too carefully consider the principles upon which this judgment and this selection are made.

The above words of our Lord indicate that the heart and the mouth are under very special scrutiny, the former representing the individual character, and the latter being an index of the character. It is in this same view of the matter that those words of wisdom were penned,--"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee." (Prov. 4:23,24.) The indication is clear that a right condition of heart is necessary to right words; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," as experience testifies to every man. It is therefore just that our words should be a criterion of judgment in the Lord's estimation, as he tells us they are. True, honied words are sometimes only the masks of deep hypocrisy; but the mask is sure to drop off some time, as soon as selfish policy renders a change of tactics necessary. The fact therefore remains that the words, the entire course of conversation and conduct, are an index of the heart.

^[1]Our first concern, then, should be for the heart--that its affections and dispositions may be fully under the control of divine grace; that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there; that justice, mercy, benevolence, brotherly kindness, love, faith, meekness, temperance, supreme reverence for God and Christ, and a fervent love for all the beauties of holiness, may be firmly fixed as the governing principles of life. If these principles be fixed, established, in the heart, then out of the good treasure of the heart the mouth will speak forth words of truth, soberness, wisdom and grace.

Concerning our Lord Jesus, whose heart was perfect --in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, it was said, "Grace is poured into thy lips;" and again, "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." (Psa. 45:2; Luke 4:22.) Moses, personating Christ, foretold the blessed influences of the Lord's words, saying, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." (Deut. 32:2.) And Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63.) So wise, just and true were the Lord's words, that, though his enemies were continually seeking to find some fault, it is said, "They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marveled at his answers and held their peace." (Luke 20:26.) And others said, "Never man spake like this man."--John 7:46.

Thus our Lord left a worthy example to his people, which the Apostle urges all to follow, saying, "Let your speech be always with grace [with manifest love and kindness], seasoned with salt [a purifying and preservative influence]." (Col. 4:6.) And Peter adds, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,"--wisely, and in accordance with the spirit and Word of the Lord. Again, it is written, "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile [deceit]." "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles." "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious words: but the lips of a fool [an unwise, reckless talker] will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is mischievous madness." "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."-- Psa. 34:13; Prov. 21:23; Eccl. 10:12,13; 5:2.

Job, in the midst of all his afflictions, was very careful not to sin with his lips. (Job 2:10; 31:30; 1:21,22.) He knew that his words would be taken by the Lord as an index of his heart, and he was careful to keep both the heart and the words right, saying, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil [calamities, troubles--for discipline or refining]?... The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." There was no spirit of rebellion in a heart out of whose abundance came such words of loving submission, patience and faith under severe testings, and that, too, without a clear apprehension of the divine wisdom in permitting them.

The Psalmist puts into the mouth of God's consecrated and tried people these words of firm resolution:--"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked [who tempts and tries the righteous] is before me."--Psa. 39:1.

How necessary to the stability of Christian character is such a resolution, and the self control which develops under a firm adherence to it. ^[2]In an unfriendly world we can expect to receive only the reproaches of our Master; for the servant is not above his Lord. The world, the flesh and the devil oppose our way: there are fightings within and fears without, and many are the arrows and fiery darts aimed at the righteous. But what is the safe attitude of the soul under afflictions and severe testings? Is it not in silence before God, waiting and watching first to see his leading, his will, in every matter before presuming to touch things that often involve so much? So the Psalmist suggests, saying, "I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, even from good [even from doing or saying what seemed good in my own sight]; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, and in my self-communing there burnt a fire [description of a fiery trial]. Then spake I with my tongue"--not to the revilers, nor to others, but to the Lord.

Yes, it is always our blessed privilege to carry our sorrows and vexations to the Lord;

"For he knows

How to steal the bitter from life's woes."

He does it, as the Psalmist suggests (vs. 4-6), by showing us, through experience, the vanity of all earthly things and their utter inability to satisfy the soul's cravings, or to comfort the wounded spirit. Then comes the thought that the present life, with its cares, vexations and sorrows is passing away, that our days are but as a handbreadth, and however vexing our experiences, they will soon be over; and if we permit them to do so they will only work out in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and develop in us strong and noble characters, disciplined to thorough self-control, thoughtful consideration, patient endurance of affliction and loving loyalty and faithfulness and trust in God. Then the assurances of the blessed rewards of righteousness in the life to come begin to have a new and deeper significance, and we are made to realize that this is not our continuing city, but we seek one to come. Thus the heart is separated from earthly things, and made to realize the superior worth of heavenly things. Nothing but the Lord himself can satisfy the longings of the soul, which, tempest-tossed and tried, comes to realize--

"How vain is all beneath the skies,

How transient every earthly bliss,

How slender all the fondest ties,

That bind me to a world like this!"

Thus chastened and comforted, we learn to look beyond the present to the glory that shall by and by be revealed in the faithful overcomers, who, by patient continuance in well-doing in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, seek for the prize revealed to faith alone. Thus disciplined and blessed under fiery trials by going to the Lord for comfort and help, the child of God begins to realize what it means to be dead to the world and alive toward God, with a keen appreciation of his love and goodness and grace; and being thus separated from the world, and more firmly united to Christ, the language of the heart is, as the Psalmist further suggests, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." (Vs. 7.) Thus

"E'en sorrow, touched by heaven, grows bright

With more than rapture's ray,

^[1] Apr. 19 Manna, Mat. 12:34-35

^[2] Apr. 18 Manna, 1 Pet. 4:12-13

As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day."

Such is the blessed result of bridling the tongue under circumstances of trial and vexation, and humbly taking all our cares to the Lord in prayer, to the end that, when we speak, our speech may be with grace, seasoned with salt, and that under all circumstances we may speak as the oracles of God.

Considering our Lord's words above quoted--that we must give an account for "every idle [unprofitable or pernicious] word"--in view of the fact that the present is our (the Church's) judgment day, we see what great importance attaches to our words.^[3] All our words are taken by the Lord as an index of our hearts. If our words are rebellious, or disloyal, or frivolous, or flippant, or unkind, unthankful, unholy or impure, the heart is judged accordingly, on the principle that, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Thus our words, in all the varied circumstances of our daily life, are bearing testimony continually before God of the condition of our hearts. So our Lord's words imply: and in this view of the case how timely is the admonition,--"Be not rash with thy mouth; and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God [And remember that "all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do."--Heb. 4:13]; for God [our Judge] is in heaven [upon the throne], and thou upon earth [under trial before the bar of God]; therefore let thy words be few." Let them be thoughtful and wise, as uttered before God, and not rash, hasty andilly considered.

Again, in harmony with the Lord's statement of the responsibility incurred by our words, it is also written, "He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." (Prov. 13:3.) What a fearful responsibility attaches to the tongue that wags in an evil, or even in a flippant, way, which is also dishonoring to God! And how necessary is the injunction of the Apostle Peter, "Be sober and watch unto prayer!"--1 Pet. 4:7; 1:13; 5:8.

The Psalmist puts this prayer into the lips of all who feel this responsibility, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep a guard at the door of my lips. Permit not my heart to incline after any evil thing." "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." "My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. Let thy hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation [from all sin, and for the perfection and beauty of holiness], O Lord; and thy law is my delight."--Psa. 141:3,4; 19:14; 119:171-174.

^[4]That, as imperfect beings, we may always be perfect in word and deed is not possible. Despite our best endeavors we will sometimes err in word as well as in deed, yet the perfect mastery of our words and ways is the thing to be sought by vigilant and faithful effort. But, nevertheless, for every idle word we must give an account in this our day of judgment.^[5] If, in the daily scrutiny of our ways, which is the duty of every Christian, we discover that in any particular our words have been dishonoring to the Lord, we should remember that, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1); and in the name of our Advocate we may approach the throne of grace, explain to our Heavenly Father our realization of the error, our deep regret at our failure to honor his name and his cause by a holy walk and conversation, and humbly request that the sin be not laid to our charge, but that it may be blotted out through his gracious provision for our cleansing through Christ, humbly claiming that in his precious blood is all our hope and trust.

Thus we should render up our account for every idle word; and by our words of repentance, supplemented by the merits of Christ applied by faith, shall we be acquitted. Otherwise the idle words, dishonoring to the Lord, will stand against us and condemn us, and we will be obliged to suffer the consequences. The first consequence will be self-injury, for every evil thought or word indulged hardens the character and inclines it the more toward unrighteousness. The

second consequence is a bad example to others, and the stirring up of evil in them. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." (Prov. 15:1.) Thus, as the result of unwise or unkind words, we may stir up about us difficulties which will become the agents of retributive justice to teach us the lesson of self-control, and consideration for the feelings and opinions of others. It is often the case that the Lord (or the devil) is blamed for sending trials which are simply the natural results of our own mistakes. And those who fail to locate the root of the trouble (*in themselves*) pray in vain for the Lord to remove miraculously what they themselves could obviate by obedience to the Word, and vigorous self-discipline. "If we would judge [and correct] ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord [largely by the experiences through which our own faults put us], that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. 11:31,32.) But even should it be admitted that the difficulties are not directly caused by God, or the devil ("Every man is tempted [tried] when he is drawn away of his own lusts [desires] and enticed"), the natural tendency is to blame the matter on some one else, and to think that our loss of patience, our hasty word or act was the fault of another. How many deceive and encourage themselves with the thought: "If every body else had as reasonable and generous a nature as I have our family or church gathering or community would be a veritable heaven upon earth!" Beloved, let us examine *ourselves*, let us be very humble, lest the very words of self-congratulation and self-satisfaction which we consider in our hearts (if we do not utter them aloud) bring our condemnation. "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye [what merit is there in it]?" (Luke 6:33-38.) It is only when we "endure grief, *suffering wrongfully*," that our suffering is acceptable to God as a sacrifice of sweet incense. "What glory is it if, *when ye be buffeted for your faults*, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called." (1 Pet. 2:19-21.) Beloved, let us see to it that our sufferings are for righteousness' sake only, and let us not charge God or our neighbors for tribulations resulting from the indulgence of our inherited or cultivated faults.

"In many things we are all faulty. If any one does not err in word, he is a perfect man, able to control the whole body." (Jas. 3:2.) But such a man does not exist. We all need and must continually plead the merit of our Redeemer and Advocate, while we strive daily to bring every thought into captivity to the will of Christ, and to perfect holiness in the fear (reverence) of the Lord.

In view of this fact, which we trust all of the Lord's people will endeavor more and more fully to realize, viz., that we now stand before the bar of judgment, we inquire, in the words of Peter, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"^[6] God-likeness certainly cannot include any harmful gossip, any unclean or unholy conversation, any disloyal or rebellious words. Let such things be put far away from all who name the name of Christ in sincerity and truth. And let us remember daily to settle our accounts with the Lord, to make sure that no record of idle words, unrepented of, and consequently unforgiven, stands against us. "Let your conversation be as cometh the gospel of Christ." "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Thus out of the good treasure of the heart we shall be able to speak the words of truth and soberness, to honor our Lord by a godly walk and conversation, to subdue the evil tendencies of our fallen nature, and to have our conversation "honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." --Phil. 1:27; 4:8; 1 Pet. 2:12.

If daily we render up our accounts to God and seek his grace for greater overcoming power with each succeeding day, we shall be acquitted in judgment and stand approved before God through Christ, having the testimony of his holy spirit with our spirits that we are pleasing and acceptable to him.

^[3] ½ Feb. 14 Manna, Mat. 12:37

^[4] ½ Feb. 14 Manna

^[5] Apr. 22 Manna, Mat. 12:36

^[6] Mar. 30 Manna, 2 Pet. 3:11

R4804 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

SIN NOT WITH YOUR TONGUE

"I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me."--Psa. 39:1.

OUR general *thoughts* have much to do with our *language*, our general conversation. Whoever, therefore, possesses a proper control

of his *heart*, will govern himself in every sense of the word. If our ways please the Lord, if our ways are ways of righteousness, then out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak to the edification of the hearer. The ways being right, the utterances will be right. People generally love themselves and avoid saying anything bitter, unkind, about themselves. But the man who hates his neighbors will have very little difficulty in saying something bitter or unkind of them.

Though the tongue is one of the most useful members, yet it is necessary to put a bridle, a restraint, a controlling influence upon it. With the tongue we may honor our God or we may blaspheme him. When in the presence of the wicked, we need to be still more on guard than with the righteous; for with the former the tendencies and thoughts are toward evil. When with the wicked or in their presence we are in contact with a degrading influence. At such times, some of sympathetic disposition may find special difficulty in bridling their tongues; but it is better to do so than to speak of even good things to the wicked, as we would feel at liberty to do with the righteous. The Lord has suggested, "Cast not your pearls before swine,...lest they turn again and rend you."

Besides the evilly inclined of the world there is another class Scripturally called the wicked; namely, people who have a knowledge of the Lord, but who take their stand in opposition to him. Judas was of this class. So there are about us those who are in an adverse attitude. None seem to be so cynical as those who have been partakers of the Holy Spirit, but who have turned their backs upon "the Way, the Truth and the Life." Such seem to be more wicked than others in that they are in a more reprehensible attitude. No matter how careful we are, these will distort our words and assert that we have said something that we have not said.

The warning of the Scriptures is not against the tongue itself, but against the *power we exercise against others* by the use of our tongues. Probably every person of experience will fully agree with the statement that the tongue is potent in its influence beyond any other member of the body, for either good or evil.

THE TONGUE OFTEN A POWER FOR EVIL AMONG THE LORD'S PEOPLE

As the bit in the horse's mouth will control his strength; and as the small rudder of a vessel will direct its course; so the tongue, and the pen, its representative, may influence large numbers of people for good or ill. How important, therefore, is the tongue! And how much more frequently do we find it employed as an agency for evil than for good; to pull down rather than to build up the faith; to implant seeds of discord and discontent rather than those which will produce righteousness and peace! While this is specially true in the worldly, it is also true among God's people; and each should remember that to some extent he is a teacher, and day by day is either forwarding or hindering the cause of truth, righteousness and peace.

In the unregenerate world the tongue is a "fire" causing no end of burning of wrath, envy, hatred, strife and everything that defiles the entire body, stimulating all the fallen passions and desires. No wonder the Apostle declares that, figuratively, the tongue is set on fire of *gehenna*--the Second Death. Its burning tends to bring, not only its owner, but others to destruction.

⁽⁴⁾As imperfect beings we may not always be perfect in word and deed. Despite our best endeavors we sometimes err in word as well as in deed; *yet the perfect mastery of our words and our ways* is to be sought by *vigilant and faithful effort*. But, nevertheless, for every *idle word* we must give an account in this *our* day of Judgment.

WE SHOULD DAILY RENDER OUR ACCOUNTS

If, in the daily scrutiny of our ways, which is the duty of every Christian, we discover that our words have in any way been dishonoring to the Lord, we should remember that, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous" (I John 2:1); and in the name of our Advocate we may approach the throne of grace. There we may explain to our Heavenly Father our realization of our error, our deep regret at our failure to honor his name and his cause by a holy walk and conversation, and humbly request that the sin be not laid to our charge; but that it may be blotted out by his gracious provision for our cleansing, through Christ, humbly acknowledging that in his precious blood is all our hope and trust.

Thus we should render up our account for every idle word; and by our words of repentance, supplemented by the merit of Christ applied by faith, shall we be acquitted. Otherwise, the idle words

dishonoring to the Lord, will stand against us and condemn us, and we shall be obliged to suffer the consequences. The first consequence will be *self-injury*, for every evil thought or word indulged hardens the character and inclines it the more toward unrighteousness. The second consequence is that by setting a bad example to others we stir up evil in them. "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." (Prov. 15:1.) Thus, as the result of unwise or unkind words, we may stir up about us difficulties which will become agents of retributive Justice to teach us the lesson of self-control and consideration for the feelings and opinions of others.

It is often the case that the Lord (or the Devil) is blamed for sending trials, which are simply the natural results of our own mistakes. Those who fail to locate the root of the matter (*in themselves*) pray in vain for the Lord to remove miraculously what they themselves could obviate by obedience to the Word and vigorous self-discipline. "If we would judge [and correct] ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord [largely by the experiences through which our own faults put us], that we should not be condemned with the world."--I Cor. 11:31,32.

THE TENDENCY OF FALLEN NATURE IS TO BLAME OTHERS RATHER THAN OURSELVES

But even should it be admitted that the difficulties are not directly caused by God or by the Devil ("Every man is tempted [tried] when he is drawn away by his own lusts [desires] and enticed"), the natural tendency is to blame some one else, and to think that our lack of patience, our hasty word or act, was the fault of another. How many deceive and encourage themselves with the thought, "If everybody else had as reasonable and generous a nature as I have, our family or Church gathering or community would be a veritable heaven upon earth!" Beloved, let us examine *ourselves*, let us be very humble lest the thoughts of self-congratulation and self-satisfaction which we may consider in our hearts, even if we do not utter them aloud, bring our condemnation.

"If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye [what merit is there in it]? (Luke 6:32,33.) It is only when we "endure grief, *suffering wrongfully*," that our suffering is acceptable to God as a sacrifice of sweet incense. "What glory is it if, *when ye be buffeted for your faults*, ye take it patiently? but if, *when ye do well and suffer for it*, ye take it *patiently*, this is acceptable to God; for even *hereunto were ye called*." (I Pet. 2:19-21.) Beloved, let us see to it that *our sufferings* are for *righteousness' sake only*, and let us not charge God or our neighbors for tribulations resulting from the indulgence of our own inherited or cultivated faults.

In view of the fact that we *now* stand before the bar of Judgment, which, if we are truly the Lord's people, we will endeavor more and more fully to realize, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Pet. 3:11.) Godlikeness certainly cannot include any harmful gossip, any unclean or unholy conversation, any disloyal or rebellious words. Let us remember daily to settle our accounts with the Lord, to make sure that no record of idle words not repented of, and, consequently, unforgiven, stands against us. "Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ."

HOLY THOUGHTS PRODUCE HOLY WORDS

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, *think on these things*." (Phil. 1:27; 4:8.) Thus out of the good treasure of the heart we shall speak the words of truth and soberness, and honor our Lord by a godly walk and conversation, subduing the tendencies of our fallen nature, and "having our conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."--I Pet. 2:12.

If daily we render up our accounts to God and seek his grace for greater *overcoming power* with each succeeding day, we shall be acquitted in judgment and stand approved before God, through Christ, having the testimony of his Holy Spirit with our spirits that we are pleasing and acceptable to him. So, dear brethren, let us "take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongues." (Psa. 39:1.) There is nothing that is of so powerful an influence as the tongue. The influence of a good word, a good thought, may become worldwide; an evil thought, an evil word, may also extend *its* influence to the end of the world.

⁽⁴⁾ 1/2 Feb. 14 Manna